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Who can be an Organ Donor?

Questions and Answers about Organ Donation

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Who can be an Organ Donor?

Questions and Answers about Organ Donation

1. Why ask healthy people to be organ donors?

More and more people today need organ transplants, but there are not enough good organs available. Accident victims are only one option. Patients who wait for an organ transplant need healthy donors. A healthy person can donate one kidney. Once in a while, a healthy person may be able to donate part of his or her liver, lung, pancreas, or intestine.

2. Can anyone be an organ donor?

Sometimes a patient will ask a loved one or friend to donate an organ. There are also people who decide on their own to be an organ donor. Either way, this decision should be yours alone. No one should pressure you into donating an organ.

If you want to be an organ donor, you must be in good health. You may not be able to donate if you have high blood pressure, diabetes, or other health problems. If giving an organ puts your long-term health at risk, you will not be able to donate. The transplant team has the final say about your state of health.

3. Does it hurt to donate?

All surgery can cause some pain while you recover. The amount of pain depends on the type of operation you have. Your transplant team will make sure you have the least amount of pain and discomfort. Most organ donors feel the pain is worth it because they have helped someone live a longer, healthier life.

4. What are the risks?

Before you donate an organ, the transplant team will assess your risks. They will explain all the risks and benefits of being an organ donor. They will tell you what choices they have if you decide not to donate. And they will always be available to answer your questions.

5. Can I get paid for donating an organ?

No, it is against the law. You do not get any money or gifts for being an organ donor, but you should not have to pay any of the costs. Your transplant program will pay for the tests to see if you can be a donor. It may also help pay the cost of travel and hotel rooms for you and your family.

6. Are there any costs I have to pay for?

You do not pay for the tests to see if you can be a donor. You do not pay the hospital costs. However, you are responsible for the cost of your own health care after you donate the organ.



7. How long will it take me to recover?

Most donors feel good within 60 days after surgery. The actual time depends on the type of operation you have. Your transplant team will give you an idea of how long it might take you to recover.

8. Should I take leave from work to recover?

Most donors use both sick leave and vacation time to get better after the operation. Some federal and state employees can get special leave for organ donation. Some private employers also give special leave. Talk to your employer and transplant team to learn what options you have.

9. What happens after I decide to donate an organ?

First, you will meet with the transplant team, answer questions about your health, and have a physical exam. The team will order many tests for you. You will have a psychological exam to make sure you have thought through the decision to donate. Finally, a match test will be done to make sure you and the person who will get your organ have a compatible, or matching, blood/tissue type.

You will not be able to donate your organ if:

- Your blood/tissue is not compatible with the recipients*
- You do not understand the pros and cons of donation
- You are not acting on your own free will
- You are not healthy enough to donate

*Some centers can overcome incompatibility issues. If not, you may be able to donate to another patient. You can discuss these options with the transplant team.

10. Where do I go to be evaluated?

If you want to give an organ to a specific person, it is best to go to his or her transplant center. If you live far from that person's transplant center, that center can arrange to have your tests done closer to you.

11. Are there any long-term effects from surgery?

Any surgery can affect your health over time. However, donating an organ does not usually cause long-term problems. Your transplant team will discuss potential health risks with you. If you are having problems as a result of your surgery, call your transplant program. In general, however, transplant centers do not give long-term health care to donors.

12. What happens if I change my mind during the donor tests?

If you decide not to donate, the transplant team will support your decision and keep it private. They will say tests showed you were not a good match.